

Message Text

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PAGE 01 FREETO 02748 300931Z

ACTION INR-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6022

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PINR SL

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ABDULAI OSMAN CONTEH: BIO DATA

REF: STATE 204766

1. GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE INFORMATION SERVICE RELEASE SHOWS ABDULAI OSMAN CONTEH, M.P. FOR KAMBIA WEST AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS BORN AUGUST 5, 1945 AT PEPEL, NORTHERN PROVINCE. EDUCATION, LL.B. HONS. (LONDON) 1969; B.L. (LINCOLNS INN) 1970; MASTER OF LAWS (LONDON) 1971; PH.D. (CAMBRIDGE) 1974. STATE COUNSEL 1974-75; TEACHING FELLOW, FOURAH BAY COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE 1975-77; HAROLD PORTER PRIZE, LONDON UNIVERSITY, 1976; CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC BLUE, 1970; GENERAL SECRETARY OF SIERRA LEONE BAR ASSOCIATION 1974. STUDIED IN THE HAGUE ON A U.N.I.T.A.R. INTERNATIONAL LAW FELLOWSHIP 1976. FIRST ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT MAY 1977, NAMED MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MAY 1977. PRIOR TO HIS ELECTION, DR CONTEH MAINTAINED A PRIVATE LAW PRACTICE IN FREETOWN AS WELL AS TEACHING. MARRIED.

2. SINCE HIS APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN MINISTER, CONTEH HAS SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME ON MISSIONS ABROAD TO INCLUDE COMMON-WEALTH HEADS OF STATE CONFERENCE, OAU CONFERENCE, AND MORE RECENTLY ANTI-APARTHEID CONFERENCE. IN ONE SUBSTANTIVE

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DISCUSSION SHORTLY AFTER HE ASSUMED PORTFOLIO EMBOFFS WERE IMPRESSED WITH HIS INTELLIGENCE AND MENTAL AGILITY. HE IS WELL VERSED IN MOST MAJOR INTERNATIONAL ISSUES FROM HIS DAYS AS TEACHING FELLOW IN INTERNATIONAL LAW, FOURAH BAY COLLEGE. ALTHOUGH SOMEWHAT RESERVED AND FORMAL, HE APPEARS PERSONALLY WELL DISPOSED TOWARD U.S. AND DURING SOCIAL OCCASIONS ALWAYS MAKES IT A POINT TO TALK WITH EMBOFFS.

3. PREDICTABLY, HE ADHERES CLOSELY TO GOSL POLICY
SOUTHERN
AFRICAN AND NORTH-SOUTH ISSUES. ON ISSUES FURTHER REMOVED
FROM AFRICA WE BELIEVE HE IS PREPARED TO BE HELPFUL AS LONG
AS HE IS NOT PLACED IN EXPOSED PSOTION. WE BELIEVE HIS
INTELLIGENCE AND LEGAL TRAINING MAKE HIM WELL QUALIFIED TO BE
FOREIGN MINISTER. PRESIDENT STEVENS, UPON HIS RETURN FROM
OAU CONFERENCE, PUBLICLY PRAISED CONTEH FOR HIS EFFECTIVE
WORK AT THE CONFERENCE. CONTEH HAS NO POLITICAL STANDING
OF HIS OWN. HE PROBABLY OWES HIS ELECTION TO THE EFFORTS OF
VICE PRESIDENT KOROMA TO BRING HIM INTO POLITICS.

4. DURING INITIAL COURTESY CALL ON AMBASSADOR LINEHAN, CONTEH
REMARKED HE HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO MEET EITHER AMBASSADOR
YOUNG OR AMBASSADOR MCHENRY AT ANTI-APARTHEID CONFERENCE. IF
POSSIBLE, POST RECOMMENDS THAT USUN OFFICIAL ARRANGE TO MEET
WITH CONTEH DURING 31/32 UNGA.
LINEHAN

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